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- (1) Editorial: Collapse of WTO talks -- Failure is no longer acceptable

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
December 17, 2008

Faced with an unprecedented crisis, the global economy is in great turmoil like a ship being tossed back and forth by a swift current in front of a mighty falls. The ship will be sucked under the waterfall unless all crewmembers pull on the oars with all their strength.

But so far, no one is able to fall in line to make even the first

pull of the oar. Coordination of views had been underway at the multilateral trade talks (Doha Round) sponsored by the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the aim of reaching a framework agreement before year's end. However, the member countries have given up holding a ministerial meeting to reach an agreement before the end of the year, because major countries have failed to fill the gaps in their views.

The WTO talks were the first litmus test to see if major countries could act together. The damage caused by their failure will be enormous.

Leaders from the group of 20 who met in a financial summit in November sent a message that they were determined to reach an agreement before year's end. At the time, there were increasing indications of a simultaneous slowdown of economies in the world. Their aim was to prevent trade from shrinking by stemming the rise of protectionism. The failure of the major countries to do so casts doubts about their determination. They instead might have showed the world that the future course of the global economy will indeed be a difficult one.

Under such circumstances, some countries may set trade rules that will give priority to their own economies or create exclusive economic blocs. Countries that took part in the G-20 pledged not to establish new trade barriers for one year. Nevertheless, Russia has decided to raise its auto tariff starting in January.

The major cause of the setback was confrontation between the U.S. and such emerging countries as India and China. Regarding conditions

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for approving the invocation of import restrictions in the event of a sharp increase in imports of agricultural products, the U.S. sought strict standards, while emerging countries wanted to see as moderate standards as possible. Industrialized countries are seeking a substantive hike in tariffs on mined and manufactured products, such as autos and electronic products. However, emerging countries are opposing such.

Although the Bush administration, now in its final days, has lost the capability to coordinate domestic views, the U.S. is still greatly responsible for stopping the economic chaos triggered by the financial crisis that started there. At the same time, we also want China and India, whose impact on the global economy has greatly increased, to be aware that their responsibility has become heavy.

It is not until each country accepts the pain that will befall their domestic industries that trade liberalization can be realized. Since the WTO talks have been put on hold, the delay will likely worsen the simultaneous slowdown of the global economy and make it difficult for various countries to coordinate. As a result, domestic coordination of views in all countries will become even more difficult.

If the global consensus to maintain the free trade system disappears, international trade will shrink, making the economic crisis even worse. We must not forget the pre-war history, in which protectionism developed into a world war.

No country should give up on achieving the unity needed in order to reach an agreement. We would like to see final talks held at the WTO immediately, once the Obama administration is launched in the U.S. in January.

(2) Yamasaki, Kato, Kan, Kamei (YKKK) just waiting for right atmosphere to develop for political realignment

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
December 16, 2008

While the support rates for the cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso plummeting in the polls, former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Koichi Kato, former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Deputy President Naoto Kan and People's New Party (PNP) Deputy President Shizuka Kamei appeared

all together on a television talk show on Dec. 14. Their joint appearance is now creating a controversy. The four have since been dubbed the YKKK group. On the TV talk show, Yamasaki stressed that the four of them could become the lynchpin of political realignment in the future. However, Kato and Yamasaki denied the possibility of their leaving the LDP before the next general election for the House of Representatives. The situation is that the two veteran lawmakers are unable to rally together those LDP members who are critical of Aso. They appear to be trying to wait for the developments of the next regular Diet session, which is certain to be turbulent.

Appearing on the TV Asahi talk show on Sunday, the four politicians made the following remarks:

Kamei: These two died in the so-called "Kato rebellion" (in November 2000, in which Kato called on then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori to step down and Yamasaki supported him). They have recovered by a miracle, but they are just alive. Since Mr. Kato insists the LDP has

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exceeded its shelf life, the question is whether he has courage to leave the party before the next Lower House election.

Kato: I'm not considering such right now.

Yamasaki: We really belong to the LDP. We cannot hastily leave or rejoin the party.

Kan: I would like brave LDP members to take action from within the party.

Although Kamei and Kan urged Kato and Yamasaki to bolt the LDP, the two LDP lawmakers would not give their word. Yamasaki told reporters: "In case there is political realignment before the next snap election, we will not be the center of such realignment."

In 2000, when Kato urged Mori to quit the prime minister's post, he and Yamasaki then decided to leave the LDP. Therefore, the two are regarded as spring boards for realigning political parties, according to a senior LDP member. Looking back on the LDP-Social Democratic Party-New Party Sakigake coalition government, Kato said during the TV program on Sunday: "We share the view that we can discuss matters."

After the appearance of Kato and Yamasaki had been set, Yamasaki tempted Kan and Kamei to appear on the TV Asahi program, according to one of the participants.

Kato and Yamasaki planned a trip to the United States by a group of nonpartisan Diet members before the end of the year, but they have put it off due to the tight Diet schedule for December.

Political observers view that Kato and Yamasaki are considering forming a new party that would become a tripolar party made up of lawmakers bolting the LDP and DPJ. However, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa said on Dec. 15 in Kyoto:

"At this point, I do not consider (political realignment) at all. Unless we once replace the LDP-led government, true parliamentary democracy (by two major parties) will not be enrooted in Japan."

There was speculation in political circles that Kato and Yamasaki would form a new party before the end of the year in order to secure next year's political subsidies. However, there are a number of hurdles that they would first have to clear in order to leave the LDP. They have not yet secured broader support in the party. A person close to them said: "The next ordinary session will go on a rampage. (They) should wait for the right atmosphere to develop."

In a party hosted by an LDP lawmaker on Dec. 15th, former Finance Minister Bunmei Ibuki sought to constrain the four, saying:

"If Y is removed from the YKKK, the YKKK will become the KKK, which is the name of a secret organization advocating white supremacy in the United States. The organization murdered many Black Americans, so I hope many capable young LDP members will not be (figuratively)

killed."

(3) Honeymoon-like relationship between postal votes and DPJ

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
December 16, 2008

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Yoshiji Namekawa, postmaster of the Toyomi Post Office in Kujukuri Town, Chiba Prefecture, in early October received a phone call from Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa. Ozawa told him, "I would like to meet you by all means."

Namekawa, who is also the chairman of the Association of Postmasters in the Kanto Region, a local organization of the National Association of Postmasters (Zentoku; former Association of Postmasters of Specified Post Offices), visited the DPJ headquarters several days later. Ozawa greeted him with a full smile: "You did a wonderful job in the Chiba No. 9 Constituency for the last Lower House election. Please tell me how you did it, because it is what the DPJ needs most."

Ozawa proposed having a picture of them shaking hands taken, adding in a good humor, "I do not mind if you use this picture for the upcoming election campaign." He thus expressed hopes for Zentoku's support for the DPJ in the next Lower House election.

Most powerful organization

In the Lower House Chiba No. 9 Constituency, former postal bureaucrat Soichiro Okuno, a new face running on the DPJ's ticket in the upcoming election, will challenge Kenichi Mizuno, a fourth-term incumbent. Namekawa in mid-August distributed flyers introducing Okuno to about 200,000 households in the constituency, using the Association of Postmasters of 700 post offices in the prefecture. As a result, Okuno has secured an enormous visibility.

Now-defunct specified post offices originate from the entrustment of postal services to local dignitaries and rich persons by the Meiji government. Zentoku, a group of "dignitaries," is called the most powerful vote-gathering organization. Its political activities were dubbed the fourth postal service, following mail, postal saving and kampo postal insurance services. Its political organization Taiju consisting of former postmasters and their family members, who spearhead the organization's political activities in place of incumbent postmasters, who are not allowed to engage in election campaigns, has long been the LDP's greatest support organization.

Zentoku's clear-cut stance of staying away from the LDP to such a degree as to fully support a DPJ candidate plainly indicates its strong belief that it was let down by the LDP in the postal privatization promoted by former Prime Minister Koizumi.

Taiju was disbanded in January this year in order that a better organization may be formed. The new organization is called the Postal Policy Study Group, also joined by postmasters, whose membership became possible as a result of the postal privatization. Osamu Urano, chairman of the National Association of Postmasters, said, "It is significant that postmasters, who had remained in the background up until now, have now become able to engage in political activities."

Ambivalence of LDP

Zentoku's political goal is now to take a second look at the spinning off of Japan Post Group into four units and freeze the planned sales of its stocks.

One LDP member said, "If Zentoku takes the DPJ's side in the

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election, the election would be fairly difficult for the LDP." However, there are many members who take the position, as one junior

lawmaker put it, that: "Postal privatization is the showcase of the Koizumi reform. If the LDP shows understanding of a revision to its reform at all, people would take that the LDP has backpedaled on its reform policy. It would be a setback for the election."

Prime Minister Aso on November 19 showed understanding of the sales of postal stocks. However, he retracted his statement the following day. The incident appears to symbolize the LDP, which is wavering between postal votes and public opinion.

Unlike the ambivalence of the LDP, Namekawa's stance is clear. He said, "The only way to have the postal privatization revised is realizing a change of administration. We will tackle the upcoming election in a determined manner."

He always carries a briefcase with the photo taken with Ozawa in it.

(4) Civilian control shaky, with Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) unable to perform role of control tower

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
December 12, 2008

A classified meeting was held at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) everyday starting in 2004, when the first group of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops was dispatched to Iraq, until 2006. In one meeting, a Defense Ministry official brought in an iron mock shell, saying: "This is a rocket."

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Masahiro Futahashi, inviting the Foreign Policy Bureau director general from the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Operations Bureau director general and the director of the Operations Department (J3) of the Joint Staff from the uniformed services. But only the J3 director stayed behind after the directors general soon left the room.

In Iraq, there were such incidents as a rocket fired at the Self-Defense Force (SDF) camp in Samawah and a Ground Self-Defense Force's vehicle attacked with a hand-made remote-control bomb. Following such incidents, Defense Ministry officials visited the Kantei with dummies of the weapons used. According to a person concerned, "The Kantei was fully informed of what had happened in Samawah."

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had replied in the Diet before the first batch of troops was dispatched to Iraq: "Naturally, I cannot say where a noncombat zone is." But the reputation of Koizumi among uniformed personnel from the SDF staff office was not bad.

In a meeting of the Security Council held just before the first group of SDF members was sent to Iraq, Koizumi instructed the participants in effect to hand money over to uniformed personnel, saying: "You have given discretionary power to the SDF, haven't you?"

The GSDF used money from the defense budget to finance the construction of a fortress at the SDF camp and made use of grass-roots grant aid intended for developing countries as insurance for the unit.

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Under the Self-Defense Force Law, the prime minister is the supreme commander. The prime minister stands at the top in the system of civilian control. Was there any instruction from the prime minister to the SDF?

Hikaru Tomizawa, a trustee of Toyo Gakuin University, said: "If there was a goal, evaluating the SDF activities was possible. But since no goal was ever presented, I was dissatisfied."

When he was chief of staff of the GSDF in 1994, Tomizawa was ordered to engage in rescuing Rwandan refugees in Africa. Given that the operational area was dangerous, his unit was withdrawn only three months after the start of their activities. They were given no

instruction about how many refugees they should treat.

When he met with Rwandan President Paul Kagame during his visit to Japan this May, then Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda did not refer to the dispatch of SDF troops to his country in 1994, and Kagame did not express gratitude, either. The activities carried out by the SDF have been erased from history.

The plan to dispatch SDF personnel to Iraq for humanitarian reconstruction assistance was adopted at a cabinet meeting. Defense Ministry advisor Hajime Massaki, who was serving as GSDF chief of staff at that time, said: "Certainly, the Kantei presented no targets to us. We set the targets on our own, for instance, the facility-reconstruction ratio and the ratio of supplied water to the needed amount. We reported achievement rates to the Kantei."

SDF personnel controlled their work by themselves while taking into consideration politicians' intentions. Such is not called civilian control. Only when a person interested in SDF activities assumes the premiership does the Kantei fulfill the role of control tower.

The Conference on Reform of the Defense Ministry, set up in the Kantei, produced a report this July proposing in the clause on strengthening the Kantei's function as control tower the drafting of a national security strategy and the installation of an expert advisor on security to the prime minister.

In the Kantei under Prime Minister Taro Aso, there has been no move to translate these proposals into action.

(5) Meaninglessness of Murayama Statement must be driven home

SANKEI (Page 13) (Abridged slightly)
December 16, 2008

By Yasuo Ohara, professor at Kokugakuin University

Other main player in Tamogami scandal

It has been nearly two months since Toshio Tamogami was dismissed as Air Self-Defense Force chief of staff due to his controversial essay. Fierce debates over his essay show no signs of abating. Points at issue cover a wide range of areas, including the assessments of Tamogami's historical view, appropriateness of the government's step, significance of civilian control, freedom of speech for SDF personnel, propriety of entering the essay contest, timing of submitting the essay, and media reactions. Views are split even among conservatives. Albeit belatedly, I would like to add my

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view, as well. However, it is on the so-called Murayama Statement, which can be called the other main player in the Tamogami incident.

In response to a set of questions from House of Representative member Kiyomi Tsujimoto, the government presented a written reply on November 14. The reply reportedly explains why Tamogami was dismissed from the post this way: "It was inappropriate for him to express a view that was at variance with the government's standpoint on the last major war." The reply reportedly also notes, "He presented his view in an inappropriate manner on an important matter pertaining to the Constitution."

The latter is probably in response to the criticism that the SDF is not allowed to exercise the right to collective self-defense in territorial defense. Prime Minister Taro Aso has already suggested a review of the government's view on the collective self-defense right, so this part is merely an addition. Needless to say, problems lie in the former. There is no doubt that the government's view on the last major war points to the Murayama Statement.

Undefined keywords

As is widely known, the Murayama Statement was delivered before the House of Representatives on June 9, 1995. It was later released as the statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama on the August 15 end-of-the-war anniversary on the back of discontent with the Diet

resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the war. The statement is rife with masochistic expressions, such as, "during a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy," "through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering," and "my feelings of deep remorse and my heartfelt apology."

There is no room here to discuss this historical view that is one-sided and crude. The question is if the Murayama Statement, which has been treated like a gospel by successive cabinets, has any substance.

I believe "following a mistaken national policy" are the keywords here. About 11 years after the release of the Murayama Statement, Lower House member Akira Nagatsuma presented a set of questions. This elicited a reply from the government on June 13, 2006 that read: "Regarding your question about the phrase 'following a mistaken national policy,' the government, given a variety of discussions on assessments of individual acts, cannot determine anything, including its cause." This was consistent with the release in the previous year, the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, of the so-called Koizumi Statement that did not include the phrase "following a mistaken national policy."

The word "aggression" carries greater significance. Lower House member Muneo Suzuki also asked the definition of "aggression." In response, the government honestly admitted on October 6, 2006 its inability to offer a clear-cut idea in its written reply that read: "There have been all kinds of discussions on the definition of aggression under international law. We are not aware of any clear definition of the word and that makes it difficult to answer your question."

"Aggression" and "colonial rule" expunged

(Back in 1995) I clashed with then LDP Policy Research Council

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Chairman Koichi Kato, who enthusiastically promoted the 50th anniversary Diet resolution, over what should go into the resolution. I said to him: "If you want to incorporate in it such words as 'acts of aggression' and 'colonial rule,' they must be defined clearly." In response, Kato said matter-of-factly: "We are not scholars, so we don't need to offer any clear definitions." This made me realize that the vagueness of the Murayama Statement originated from there.

There is no need to discuss any further the insubstantiality of the Murayama Statement that includes those undefined keywords. Based on such ambiguous criteria, the government cannot pass judgment on Tamogami's essay titled "Was Japan an Aggressor Nation?"

Interesting enough, such expressions as "acts of aggression" and "colonial rule" did not make the Diet resolution commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, adopted on August 2, 2005, days before the release of the Koizumi Statement that left out the words "following a mistaken national policy." The series of these events seem to indicate that some sort of changes occurred over the ten-year period and that the Murayama Statement does not necessarily coincide with the government's view.

It is vital to drive home the foolishness of upholding such a statement and to stir up a discussion to reexamine the Murayama Statement from all aspects, including the historical view.

ZUMWALT